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# A Vision of Pastoral Theology

*In search of words that resurrect the dead*

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# Introduction: An invitation

The main purpose of this short essay is to invite you, whoever you are and whatever you do, to become involved in the critical, creative conversations which are pastoral theology. I think of pastoral theology not as the art of teaching clergy how to baptise babies, but as the place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experience, questions and actions to engage in a transforming dialogue which has substantial practical implications. As such, it is relevant to many people inside and outside the churches. Not least, it is relevant to the social and political institutions of which we are a part which are often driven by implicit creeds and ideologies which may be nothing less than idolatrous.

In this essay, I hope to interest you in pastoral theology, if you are not already involved, to indicate something of what I think pastoral theology might be, and to stimulate you to join in a conversation or dialogue. What is your vision of pastoral theology? What do you think it should do? What methods should it use?

My purpose here is to stimulate, even to provoke. Pastoral theology should be making a major contribution to public life and debate, as well as to church life, but it remains something of a marginalised Cinderella. How can we make it an interesting, significant activity, understood and participated in by a wide range of people?

I genuinely do not know the answer to this question, hence my invitation to dialogue and rethinking. What I provide here are some clues that I think may be relevant drawn from my own experience of working in pastoral theology. What I have written is fragmentary and full of holes and loose ends. This is deliberate; I hope it might stimulate you to have your own thoughts. The questioning that forms the process of the pastoral theological 'conversation' is at least as important as the end results and I want to open this process up for revision. If what I have written is 'up in the air' then I hope someone will think it worthwhile bringing it down to the ground.

I would like to hear other people's visions of pastoral theology both as an individual and as editor of *Contact*. That way we can move the conversation on together. In the meanwhile, I want to thank my own immediate partners in pastoral theological conversation, Paul Ballard, Elaine Graham and James Woodward. This essay is partly a product of endless enjoyable discussions with each of them, particularly the last-named, though I think none of them would agree with everything I have written here.

# 1 In search of words that resurrect the dead

Most of my professional life has been spent teaching and researching pastoral or practical theology. Like many of my colleagues in this field, I regard it as

one of the most stimulating areas to which time could be devoted. Like them, I think that pastoral theology has much to offer individuals and communities, intellectually and practically, both inside and outside the churches. Pastoral theology lies at the centre of the contemporary theological enterprise, displacing the dogmatic and biblical theology which have been claimed supremacy over the centuries (1). It is the place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue which is intellectually critical and practically transforming. Surely nothing could be more interesting or significant than that!

When I started working in pastoral theology in the 1970s, I thought the area had a great future before it. Pastoral studies had just been made a compulsory part of education for ministry in Anglican theological colleges. There were a number of bright lights on the horizon in terms of practitioners of the discipline (2). Theologies of commitment which emphasised experience and practice over abstract theory like liberation and feminist theologies were in the ascendant. The interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning was on the lips of every politically correct theological educator. All seemed set for pastoral theology to step out from behind the throne and to assume its central position in the religious firmament.

The coronation of pastoral theology, like the eschaton, now seems to have been indefinitely postponed. While there has been a clear increase in interest in the area and some interesting work has been done by individuals, it remains a minority concern. Many people prefer to study the Bible and systematic theology in preference to practical theology. Extramural classes which deal with practical or pastoral theology, eg, about pastoral responses to care in the community, are poorly attended in comparison to those which deal with traditional, areas of theological concern, eg, the authorship of the gospel of Mark, the existence of God. It is rare for a bright research student to opt for a topic in practical theology rather than in some better-known academic theological discipline, however obscure or *recherche* its focus may be. Pastoral theology has failed to assert itself or to live up to its promise.

This essay attempts to hasten the day when pastoral theology's significance and potential is realised. There may be many reasons for the continuing lack of interest in pastoral theology (not many institutions offering courses, poor or inadequately trained teachers, few opportunities, lack of research base, native British contempt for anything 'practical' etc.). However, I suspect one of the main obstacles to wider interest in pastoral theology is that pastoral theologians have failed to provide an attractive, imaginative vision of what pastoral theology is and could be. Any 'new' discipline attempting to gain public attention or syllabus time must work hard to get across what it is exactly that it offers and demands if people are to know what it is and to be convinced of its value. Pastoral theology has not commended itself adequately as an interesting activity to its potential audiences and participants. An appeal to the imagination is essential to rectify this situation.

My aim here, therefore, is to provide a vision of pastoral theology that will stimulate and hearten fellow pastoral theologians and help those presently outside the pastoral theology sphere to understand what this activity is about. My purpose is evangelical, inspirational, and future-oriented; I want people to get excited about pastoral theology, to see its possibilities, and to become involved in it.

Pastoral theology should be lively, ecstatic theology that dances, puzzles, stimulates, delights, strikes sparks from contemporary experience and transforms individuals and communities. This kind of theology will be filled with a sense of power, promise, expectation, discovery, longing desire, homecoming, dreaming of dreams, attraction (3). It will be concerned with the making and breaking of symbols and words and with the possibilities word play opens up. It will help to elicit pleasure in the pastoral, protesting against the words, concepts and practices which foreclose on potential and possibility and the kinds of totalitarian Stalinist world views that crush individuals and groups in world and church. It will be a charismatic theology of the word, filled with divided tongues that help people to discover and realise the spirit within through life-giving words and images that speak from, and to, the human condition in its pluriformity. Confused, muddled and messy, pastoral theology will be lively and incarnate, finding a place for bodies, emotions and symbols as well as for mind, reason and tradition. It will be subtle and allusive, including doubt, darkness and shadow as well as assertion and light (4). As authentic, engaged, creative art rather than detached pseudo-science it will act as therapist and spokesperson for the whole theological enterprise insofar as it has become distanced from life and people. If it does not teach other kinds of theology to dance, it might at least persuade them to sway a little more in time to the music of contemporary experience.

I have adopted several of the privileges of the visionary here. I do not make much attempt to be comprehensive or systematic in my coverage of pastoral theology. (For a history of pastoral theology and where it lies presently readers will need to turn elsewhere (5).) Like any other visionary, I hope that my words will be found to have a measure of truth, insight and correspondence to common reality, but I recognise that straining to look into the future on the basis of past and present involvement means that aspects of my vision are bound to be wholly or partially misconceived. Finally, like the prophets and apocalypticists of old I intend, if I can, to use strong, motivating language, vivid images and striking metaphors wherever I can. This is an integral part of outlining my vision of pastoral theology, encapsulated in the words entitling this section, 'the quest for words that resurrect the dead'; I need to say a bit more about it.

One of the functions of biblical visionaries was to use words vigorously to point beyond themselves to the action of an invisible God. The Bible remains a source of powerful words – images, metaphors, poems and narratives that have changed the world and lives of people. Unfortunately, religious and theological language today has been emptied of power and interest. In the post-Enlightenment quest

to achieve social and academic acceptability it seems that religious people have denuded themselves of the kind of language that raises the dead, that makes a fundamental difference to the way people see and interact with themselves and the world. Such power and interest that religion has comes from its contact with irrationality; it flows from and speaks to the pre- and unconscious parts of individual and society. In this transitional, largely pre-linguistic part of the human the symbol, the ritual, and the metaphor hold sway and the logical, rational proposition has relatively little purchase (6). It is this aspect of humanity that much theology and church life ignores, denies, or furtively manipulates. It is precisely this part of the human which motivates, energises, plays and determines. Here we have a great resource of energy which in the old days was directly addressed by vivid religious language.

I do not want to suggest the wholesale abandonment of rationality here, but I do want to advocate a major place for word play, metaphor, symbol, narrative, image and story in pastoral theology. Unless we can find new and interesting words, metaphors, images and symbols that 'cut the world at its joints' to encapsulate our pastoral and theological experience, pastoral theology will be, like much of the rest of theology, a bloodless cadaver which is of interest only to necrophiles (7). Pastoral theology needs to become a more directly religious activity making its appeal to the religious, symbolising dimension of people as much as to their sense of rationality (8).

In doing pastoral theology I look for words that raise the dead, that fundamentally change perceptions, that transform people, society and the world because of their symbolic power; words that make a difference. It is not for nothing that the words of God in the Bible are synonymous with acts and deeds; I find this double meaning helpful here (9). Pastoral theology is not knowledge for its own sake but transformational knowledge and process that makes some kind of difference in reality. The myths and metaphors of the Bible, now in danger of being entirely marginalised, show the way here to some newness of life and freshness of perception through the non-propositional. A good image or metaphor can be worth a thousand arguments because it enters into the preconscious, what might be called the soul.

Please do not take my word for all this; look at the work of Rubem Alves from whence the phrase about words that resurrect the dead comes (10). Alves is a Brazilian psychoanalyst, poet and professor of philosophy who actually writes theology. The coiner of the term 'liberation theology', he collides his experience of life, analysis, psychodynamic theory, theological tradition and literature to produce vivid poetic prose that reaches those parts of the person that other theologians cannot reach. Alves talks of 'words that are good to be eaten'; he provides them, cutting through traditional theological preoccupations and forms of expression to provide a transforming, magical language meal for his readers (11). It is this kind of applied, creative, transformative thinking, speaking, acting and writing which depends heavily on rich images and metaphors that I believe

would better serve pastoral theology and entice more people into it rather than the somewhat chilly, thin, propositional writing to which I, in common with others, am enslaved (12).

Because I believe in the importance of finding generative, fecund new words, images and metaphors to enliven and nurture people and pastoral theology that there is what I hope is vivid image at the heart of this monograph. I invite you to swim with me and others in 'the delectable, deep lake of pastoral theology'. But first you might very well ask, 'Who needs pastoral theology?'

# 2 Who needs pastoral theology?

Anyone who is involved in shaping or experiencing visions, values, belief systems and practices could benefit from becoming self-consciously involved in pastoral theology (1). My experience of working with people in many different occupations and worlds (health workers, managers, university teachers) is that they often warm to the pastoral theology approach of critically relating their beliefs and practices together and seeing them as a kind of implicit religion. There are many implicit faiths and religions in the modern world and pastoral theology can help people to see their own position more clearly and critically.

People who are not members of official religious faiths and who have no theistic belief can often be seen to be involved in systems of belief and ritual practice. So, for example, contemporary National Health Service managers appear to have a religious (ie going beyond the empirical and provable) belief in certain words and practices drawn from the operations of the market and private enterprise which will change the world for the better (a metaphysical belief if there ever was one) in line with their visions and missions. Again, health promotion workers exhort people to have faith in, ie to put their trust in, what are taken to be facts about the prevention of diseases and to act ritually in accordance with those 'facts'. While this exhortation may prove to be effective in practice, the 'leap of faith' on the part of the health promotion worker and her audience cannot be denied. Wherever people act beyond the actual evidence, or deal in values, evidence, practices and ideologies that are equivocal, untestable, or unprovable they are involved in a world of faith and religion, however unorthodox that may seem to church-going Christians (2).

If pastoral theology is the place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue which is intellectually critical and practically transforming, then it is likely that many practitioners need pastoral theologies. However, it is clearly within the work of Christians and amidst those who see themselves as pastoral carers that pastoral theology might be perceived to have a central role. You might expect

that pastoral theology would not need to justify itself here. Unfortunately, not all Christian ministers or practitioners, whether lay or ordained, see pastoral theology as having much relevance to themselves. This is a mistake and a loss.

One reason for becoming self-consciously involved in pastoral theology is that it is *inevitable* and unavoidable. Anyone who does anything and who is involved in a world of ultimate meanings, values and beliefs which impinge on life and practice already has some kind of working theology. This may not be articulated or thought of as a theology, but it functions as an implicit theology. In many cases, the choice is not between whether or not to have a pastoral theology, but whether or not to have an articulate, conscious pastoral theology. Implicit theologies function perfectly well without articulation. Unfortunately, they cannot be examined, criticised, or changed. The theology then has the person rather than the person having the theology.

A second reason for involvement in pastoral theology is the need to develop and be articulate about one's *identity*. It is important to know who one is and what one is not. Particularly in a time of great social and technological change it is easy for people to become confused about who they are and what they are supposed to be doing. This can be creative. But if there is no means of self-consciously articulating and identifying what is going on and what one is becoming, it can be destructive or unhelpfully compromising.

While it is desirable that the insights and practices of other occupations and academic disciplines should inform ministry it would be unfortunate if there was no real religious or theological element, method or understanding at the centre of its self-identity. The salt would lose its savour; the danger would be that it would be broad religious insights, understandings and values that would be lost in the interests of having accreditation as a profession amongst other professions. Pastoral workers need to do their work within a theological framework and method which has real significance. This will help them to understand where they are religiously (eg, in what way they relate to traditional beliefs and practices), professionally (eg, what kind of knowledge base pastoral workers use, in what way is it to be used) and personally (eg, what kind of self-knowledge and understanding is operative in a worker's life). The main underpinning knowledge, understanding and method which should inform and give distinctive identity to the skills and competencies of Christian ministry is nothing other than pastoral theology.

Related to this is the need for *communication*. Pastoral workers are often at a loss to explain to people what it is exactly that they do, why they do it, and what effects it has. Faced with critics inside or outside the churches they often end up silenced or cowed, unable to make a statement about their value and work. By developing articulate pastoral theology, people are in principle in a much better position to explain themselves to a variety of audiences. They can understand, and explain to co-workers, fellow Christians and those outside the religious community what they are about and why they are about it. Recently, traditional non-ecclesiastical employers of pastors, eg, the NHS, the Prison

Service, have become increasingly interested in gaining value for public money and cutting out elements which add nothing to the service they are offering. Unless ministers and pastors can explain and justify why their distinctively religious work and horizons are of direct interest and value they may find themselves without publicly-funded jobs. To do this with integrity, so that the rationale of ministry is not just one of being some kind of unqualified social work, there is a need for good, articulate pastoral theology here.

There is a far more creative role for pastoral theology than protection from unemployment. Developing articulate pastoral theologies allows one to become *critical*, not only of one's self, one's role and one's beliefs, but also of religious tradition and practices *and* of society and its institutions. This is important in any setting but particularly in 'secular' settings such as schools, hospitals or prisons. These institutions can easily become self-serving and essentially idolatrous, putting economic and other interests before those of the community or group being served. At a time when public services in Britain, for example, are dominated by faith in market principles, the values of effectiveness, efficiency, economy, and the apocalyptic language of visions, missions and doom scenarios, there has never been a greater need for criticism in the interests of keeping human life human in the world in the name of a living God. The theological vision stands for openness, humanity, the development of potential, the inherent flawedness or destructiveness of human institutions, the hope of infinite possibility yet to be realised. While pastoral workers like others inside and outside the churches are increasingly themselves being encouraged to conform to the visions and missions of their 'superiors', it is vital that theology should be a place where people are encouraged to ask fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life and the necessity of certain social arrangements. Without a living pastoral theology the ability to be critical when criticism is most needed may not survive (3).

Related to the need to be critical is the potential for *choice*. Those who do not have a critical perspective have little or no choice about the way in which they will proceed. Everything is as it is, reality is unproblematic and there are no choices to be made. Thinking critically about religion and practice, fundamental to much pastoral theology, necessarily opens up new options and choices; people do not have to go on doing or thinking the way that they have always done. While this may not be appealing to all pastoral workers, others will welcome it as a way of avoiding the death of boredom by unchanging routine which not only kills pastoral workers but also those with whom they work. Change and choice can be traumatic in large quantities, but without these things a sense of life and personal agency is lost.

Pastoral theology is an activity which is widely relevant in the contemporary world. It is particularly germane for ministers and overtly Christian workers for whom it should be a central area of activity, knowledge and understanding. But it is also useful to others, Christian or not, who have to relate beliefs and values

to practice. Before I go on, I just want to say one or two things about the term, 'pastoral theology'.

Pastoral theology probably has a slightly alien ring to modern ears. The word 'pastoral' has considerable historical resonance with the practice of Christian ministry due to the associations between practical leadership and care in the Bible with the whole role of being a shepherd. Because Jesus is held to have described himself as the good shepherd in his work of care and redemption (cf Jn 10.14) it seemed obvious to the churches to denote their leaders and carers 'pastors'. Thus an agricultural-sounding term has become attached to the practical work of leading the churches. Within the Catholic tradition for many centuries pastoral theology was essentially about making sure that priests understood how to rightly administer sacraments and reconcile sinners to the church. In the Protestant tradition, pastoral theology has often been seen as the application of theological principles to the life of the faithful (4). Neither of these traditions deeply informs my own use of the term 'pastoral theology', by which I am referring to the place where belief and practice meet. Some people prefer to call this meeting place 'practical theology' and I have no objection to this. There are two reasons, however, for using this slightly anachronistic term here.

First, both within and outside the churches 'pastoral theology' is, I think, in slightly more common parlance than practical theology (a term which I find either mystifies people or seems just a straight and improbable contradiction in terms). The pastoral role is one with which people are at least vaguely familiar, but there is no role called the practical theological role in everyday experience. I think it better, therefore, to take an old and common term and fill it with new and broader critical meaning rather than to proselytise for the introduction of practical theology.

The second reason is a good deal more suspect and quixotic. People rightly point to the quaint, agricultural origins of the term 'pastoral', associating it with things like Beethoven's 'Pastoral Symphony' or pastoral, ie arcadian, poetry of the eighteenth century. 'Pastoralism' refers to a rural scene or topic. One reason why people prefer to speak of practical rather than pastoral theology may be that it sounds more relevant and incisive in advanced, mostly urban societies and prescinds from images of shepherds and sheep as well as widening the scope of concern for this theology. While there is a need to escape from sheep and shepherds as models for ministry today there is a danger of losing something here. People in our society love the country and frequently go there for leisure, rest and refreshment, expending a good deal of effort, time and money in the process. If 'pastoral theology' has the associations of a day in the country which is pleasurable, relaxing and invigorating then I think this is preferable to the more earnest, utilitarian and activist feel associated perhaps with 'practical theology' (5). If practical theology sounds like you need to roll your sleeves up and get on with, something desperately useful and worthy, perhaps pastoral

theology can sound like stripping off to enjoy the sun, to appreciate the views, to absorb and appreciate nature.

Pastoral theology *is* genuinely useful. It can enlarge the universe of human discourse, instruct, provide practical counsel, illuminate human nature and provide moral advance (6). But pastoral theology is at bottom like all arts subjects and activities – pleasurable, amusing, refreshing and fun. There is no reason why that which is useful should not also be enjoyable and valuable for its own sake. And it is absolutely hopeless trying to justify an essentially artistic activity which uses imagination and words as a kind of earnest utilitarian science – social and other sciences just will not see it as such. It is for this reason that I now invite you to look at my central image for this activity: the deep, delectable lake of pastoral theology.

# 3 The deep, delectable lake of pastoral theology

Pastoral theology is a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts a dialogue which is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practically transforming. This is a rather two-dimensional description which does not sound particularly interesting or inviting. To gain a sense of the depth, complexity, richness and dynamism of pastoral theological activity it is helpful to think of it as a lake.

Imagine a large lake with distant shores. This is the whole area that pastoral theology can cover – almost anything can become of interest in pastoral theology because pastoral theology is interested in the whole of life as it is lived by people today. From the hills around the lake a large number of streams run into it containing the waters gathered in a particular locality. You can see the content of these streams as, on the one hand, significant human experiences, events and activities and, on the other, ideas, thoughts, concepts, words.

As the streams run into the lake they mingle and different flows and currents affect each other. This mixing of the streams and currents, sometimes in an almost random fashion, is typical of the reality of pastoral theology which has to deal with the complexity and 'thickness' of life, experience and interpretation. Imagine how much water there is in a large lake. This gives some sense of the potential scope and complexity of pastoral theology.

Now let us imagine that there are people in and on the lake. They are using the lake in different ways and for different purposes. Some work on the lake all the time. Others have come to fish or swim. Some just want to be on the lake and look at it because they find it attractive. Others want to draw it or take photographs of it from different angles and in different conditions. These lake users can be seen as pastoral theologians, negotiating their way through currents of words and interpretations of actions by various ways and means. Some of

them stay on the surface of the lake and move around a wide area attending to many different currents, others dive deep and attend to only one or two things at a time. They use different means of propulsion to get about and stay afloat, reflecting the different methods that can be used in pastoral theology. Sometimes they will meet each other and do things together for the purposes of fun or work. At other times they may be on their own. Sometimes they may even collide!

Out of this 'lake pastoralis' flow two rivers. After all the streams have mingled in the lake and been there for some time, they flow out again in two directions. One river is the river of significant action and activity. It is composed of actions and deeds engendered or transformed and affected by the process of pastoral theological activity. The other river is that of significant words and thoughts which have also been produced and transformed by the pastoral theological process. Actually, while it may be helpful to see these rivers as separate in some ways, it is important to see that they may meet and intermingle again in another lake. What we first thought of as one lake is better seen as a series of pastoral theological lakes which are connected and flow into each other over time.

The image or analogy of pastoral theology as a lake full of water is a helpful one for me (though it becomes strained and artificial if it is pressed too far). I value the idea of continuous flow in pastoral theology. Pastoral theology is more like moving water than a tablet of stone. It is something that moves and changes shape, content and appearance, like a lake, over time. The way in which theory and practice mixes can be very complex in pastoral theology. Often, all any one pastoral theologian is doing when they say something or do something emanating from their pastoral theological activity is picking up a jar of water drawn from the lake and saying, 'Here is the lake!' Well, that is true in a sense, but clearly the whole lake is much bigger than any one jam jar.

The idea of a lake allows for different pastoral theologians to move in different directions using different means for a variety of purposes. Lakes have more than one use (ergonomic, aesthetic, recreational) and they have dimensions of width and depth. They are spacious and people do not all have to do the same thing in the same way; ingenuity of propulsion and movement can be applauded with interest rather than condemned. Contemplating a lake and swimming in it are both valid experiences of using a lake. Nor do people have to be experts before they can start to appreciate, use, and immerse themselves in one.

Perhaps the main attraction of the image is that it sounds deep, dark and refreshing. Life is inexhaustible in its depth and complexity and the point of investigating it, like a lake, is not to empty it, dry it out and expose all its secrets but to have a deepened appreciation of it. Of course, lakes do have hidden obstacles and threats within them – submerged rocks, difficult currents etc. This is also true of life and of the pastoral theology that emerges from it.

A lake without moods, challenges, difficulties and dangers might be dead and uninteresting.

The lake image resonates with the Christian tradition of baptism by immersion – risking death through drowning to arrive at new life and a new start. Immersion in the 'lake' of pastoral theology is and should be a transforming experience that makes a difference to what one does and thinks. In this sense, pastoral theology is consonant with the changes and impetus present in life itself. Making pastoral theology a 'watery' activity is also appropriate. Water is essential to life and a source of fascination and pleasure to many of the senses, yet it is literally difficult to grasp and hard to define. To know that a lake is full of $H_2O$ is only to comprehend a little of what water is and very little of what it can mean. Just because we do not comprehend every aspect of water does not mean that we do not need it and cannot appreciate it. If pastoral theology slips through the fingers and is difficult to apprehend perhaps this is a reality-reflecting virtue rather than a vice of vagueness. Reality respecting theologies are sometimes properly elusive and lacking in clarity (1).

# 4 Pastoral theologies as critical, creative conversations

Pastoral theology is like a lake where experiences and theories mingle and are creatively transformed – they suffer a 'sea change', to mix images slightly. The lake image is, I hope, both picturesque and useful in grasping some of the broad features of pastoral theological activity, ie the process whereby experiences and events are held and mixed together. It gives an overall sense of the size, scope and nature of pastoral theology. (Actually, it is more accurate to talk of pastoral theologies in the plural, all of which have some concern with the understanding and transformation of theory and practice, but which have very different concerns, focuses, methods and outcomes.) However, it does not do much to answer the question, How is pastoral theology done? There are a number of ways and methods for undertaking pastoral theological activity. My own preferred image or model for this is that of critical, creative conversation between (a) my own ideas, beliefs, feelings, perceptions and assumptions; (b) the beliefs, perceptions and assumptions arising from the Christian community and tradition; and (c) the contemporary situation, practice or event which is under consideration.

The model of conversation has several positive features to it. Conversation often lies at the centre of human and pastoral encounters so it seems natural to extend its usage analogously into the formulation of pastoral theologies. Conversations can be short or long, deep or superficial, involve two or more parties or factors, and they do not necessarily proceed in a straightforward

direction or at the same level. Used in pastoral theology, a conversational, model does not necessarily require a lot of previous knowledge (eg, about theology or a particular event or situation) but it does presuppose a willingness to attend, to listen and to learn. The skills and conventions of conversation can be learned and benefit from practice with other people. In the end, good, creative conversations change people and their view of the world, perhaps not profoundly and immediately, but definitely and gradually. (It is helpful here to remember that, as in the Bible, words are in some sense deeds and they shape events and actions.) Conversation and talk is the stuff of individual and social life. There are advantages in seeing pastoral theological process as an enjoyable, illuminating and often demanding conversation which draws participants onwards and outwards without prescribing exactly where they should end up or what they should do (1).

I want now to look at some of the main actual or possible features which characterise contemporary pastoral theological conversations in all their diversity. What follows is partly prescription (what I hope pastoral theologies will be and take into account), partly description (observation of what is already going on). The list of features presented here may be characteristic of what some pastoral theologies *might* be in practice. They are in no particular order of importance or significance.

**Transformational**

Aristotle distinguished between practical reasoning, which helps to distinguish the proper course of action or conduct, and theoretical reasoning, which helps one to arrive at true statements and beliefs (2). Pastoral theologies arise in the sphere of practical reasoning and that they need to engage more of the person than the faculty of reason. They help people to distinguish how they should act and be. More than this, the kind of knowledge which is contained and expressed in pastoral theologies, even in their written form, is transformational knowledge.

Transformational knowledge is 'soft' knowledge.

> [It] involves *intuition, wisdom, and mystery in contrast to technical control* .... Transformational knowledge is a 'peculiar amalgam, different from the methodological knowledge sought by the humanities in their academic and scholarly pursuits. Members of the transformational disciplines are always faced with the "messy" aspects of human life' (3).

Transformational knowledge emanates in large part from the transitional, realm of the symbol. Here reason and emotion, conscious and unconscious, intersect and interconnect to generate fundamental, if not necessarily verbally expressible, understandings, hopes, fears and world views. It is in this dimension that religion operates and from which it gains its importance and significance. Transformational, knowledge is messy. It amounts to informal knowledge,

personal knowledge and that elusive thing 'wisdom' – the kind of knowledge which is very difficult to evaluate and assess by any kind of examination process. It arises from people's experience of living and their dialogue (at all sorts of different levels) with experience. Arising from 'talking back' to experience and activity, it is both knowledge in action and knowledge as action (4). It cannot be produced apart from action. Because of this, it is partial knowledge. While it has objective and communicable aspects, it cannot be exhausted in words and it is difficult to describe. It is knowledge that makes a difference, changing and transforming people and situations even as it is itself transformed and changing (5).

Increasingly we are living in an environment where all activity must be measured and clearly described in terms of actual behaviour. Vague concepts of 'education' are giving way to more limited, concrete ideas of vocational training through the National Vocational Qualification scheme, designed to produce particular skills and competencies for specific defined roles. However, at the very moment when a narrow, ratio-technocratic, instrumental view of life seems about to triumph, the realisation that not everything can be reduced to these terms is beginning to emerge. Senior managers in the public sector, for example, are starting to show an interest in nebulous topics such as ethics; they want to develop skills of judgement and discernment which are not easily categorisable. Some nurses are revolting against the idea that all their activity can be reduced to itemisable and separable acts – the actual task of nursing, they say, is more than the sum of its separate parts. The time has come for practical wisdom or transformational knowledge to re-emerge as a major resource for practice.

Browning, who works with a strongly cognitive, rational view of practical theology, suggests that it should be action guiding (6). If the process of pastoral theological activity and reflection makes no difference to what people do or how they see the world it becomes a limited, abstract and disconnected intellectual quest. However, I think it is better to describe pastoral theologies as transformational rather than action guiding. Action guiding implies a process of straight translation of theory into practice – you set your theoretical objective, identify your goals and make your plans for proceeding from here to there in as straight a line as possible. Things are never as simple as this; people are not wholly rational, and reality is complicated.

Theological aims and principles, worked out in theory, are not implemented in action in a straightforward way. That is why the Kingdom of God has still not come on earth, despite centuries of religious education and training. The process of undertaking pastoral theology transforms people, their views of the world and their actions, producing new ways of seeing and possibilities for acting. It does not necessarily produce clear actions and easily measurable outcomes. What can be measured is not necessarily what is most wanted or most valued anyway; what price wisdom, care, or love? Pastoral theology stands for a complex view of reality which incorporates meanings, images, metaphors, stories and feelings

as well as thoughts and actions. This is a kind of practical wisdom which is more valuable and more elusive than action guiding plans; it is part of what a religious world view distinctively has to offer.

**Not just propositional, rational and logical**

Christian theological activity has been dominated by dogmas, propositions and arguments to which 'believers' have been invited to give basically cognitive assent. Theologians since the Enlightenment have devoted much time and effort to showing how rational Christianity is. A good performance in such theology is one that is reasonable, well-argued, logical, linear, abstract, analytic and orderly, one which appeals to that which is rational in all people. This is consonant with the idea of God as a principle of rationality whose main gift to humankind is that of reason which is regarded as the chief feature of the God's image in us.

While this approach has many strengths, eg, liberating Christianity from superstition, it is deficient. People are more than their minds. They have emotions and non-logical parts; these are as important as reason in determining how they react and behave (7). A feminist perspective suggests that cognitive rationality, far from being the highest and most important part of all human beings, is just the self-conscious state of men: 'Objectivity [is] the word men use to talk about their own subjectivity' (8). Faith itself can be seen as an act of trust in the being of God rather than cognitive assent to proposals about the deity. Religion derives much of its real significance precisely from the fact that it speaks to the preconscious and unconscious part of the person and the community, the transitional part where symbol and pre-linguistic perception holds sway (9). This aspect of existence is not primarily addressed or expressed by linear logic and clear proposition, but more by myth, metaphor, image, symbol and story which nuance and colour perceptions of self and world.

Awareness of the hiddenness of much of the personality leads me to argue for the need to express theology in terms of rich story, symbol, image, metaphor and myth. All discourse is filled with these elements anyway, but they are often not easy to spot, particularly if they closely reflect what we take to be commonsense or scientific reality (10). The power of these elements cannot be underestimated. The metaphor of the market place which has been made a reality in the NHS, for example, has rendered some features of reality very visible (competition, 'customers', suspicion) while hiding features which were visible under the old mythology of the state-provided welfare system (co-operation, patients, trust). Indeed, the whole of British public service has been transformed by a language full of vivid images, many ironically drawn from apocalyptic Christianity, such as 'mission', 'vision' and 'doom scenario' (11). Rationality does not need to be excluded from pastoral theological process, but its dominance needs to be relativised (12).

Paradoxically, at a time when people outside religion are drawn to exploring the potential of images, metaphors and myths to motivate and change, theologians can feel embarrassed and de-skilled in their use (13). Words, images and myths by which people can understand and lead their lives are vital in an age of mass communication (14). It is important that pastoral theologies should rediscover a ministry of the word which transforms and brings to life, cracking open new possibilities. If, as R.S. Thomas has suggested, God is a great metaphor, then this metaphor has been enormously generative and creative over the centuries, creating new possibilities from people's reflections upon and refractions of metaphorical truth. A truthful fiction may be worth any amount of argument and pseudo-rationality in transforming the world – hence the enduring power of fairy tales and stories from the Bible. The words used in pastoral theology, like the word spoken in and through Jesus, should be fruitful, full of surplus meaning. They point beyond themselves to something more, and express the eschatological tension between what is and what might be.

I have already alluded to the work of Alves, Cupitt, Soelle, McFague and R.S. Thomas, suggesting that their skilled use of metaphors and words is a way of breathing new life into situations and experiences as well as into theology (15). The same could be said of approaches to pastoral theology which take narratives and stories seriously. Cupitt points out that we all live our lives as linear narratives, not as expressions of abstract theoretical or theological ideas (16). Christianity is full of powerful stories but has not valued the temporal narrative, preferring the eternal abstraction. Pastoral care has, however, always had to pay attention to the stories of individuals, mingling these with aspects of the traditional Christian narrative. It is good to see some pastoral theologians paying more attention to the mingling and clash of narratives, individual and corporate, contemporary and historical, which could be so fruitful for a pastoral theology that remains close to the actual texture of the lived reality of communities and individuals (17).

Pastoral theologies which spring from people's own words and stories must learn to be creative with them. They have to discover how to dance and move, to speak not only to people's minds but to their whole being. Christianity is familiar with the creative use of word, symbol, ritual and image. It is pastoral theologies that will elicit new ways of working with these life-giving traditional elements. In doing this, they will render a considerable service both to the church and to the world where false and destructive myths may otherwise have free reign.

### Confessional and unsystematic

By describing pastoral theological activity as confessional I want to suggest that it is prepared to find its own expression of faith and personal and group experience and to speak directly about this, as did the early Christian apostles.

It is confessional, too, in that it helps people to bear witness to the truths and questions of religion in a particular context.

It is partly because it is the product of direct reflection of particular and immediate situations and events that pastoral theology finds it hard to be systematic. Traditionally, the aspiration of theology has been to provide reasoned and ordered utterance at a high level of abstraction which has consistency and coherence, covering many eventualities, themes and areas in an even and illuminating way. Pastoral theologies cannot (and perhaps should not wish to) aspire to this level of second or third order theology (18). It takes time and effort to develop complex systematic theologies and they may be of limited practical use once they have been manufactured. Pastoral theologies will need to content themselves with being, for the most part, fragmentary, partial and unsystematic. In the modern world this should perhaps be recognised as grounds for pride rather than an inferiority complex! It is not only well-ordered theoretical systematic theology (second or third order theological activity) which covers all the bases in the game which is real theology and worth doing.

**Truthful about reality**

The great monotheistic religions have been unswerving in their stand against idolatry. That which is less than God should be named as such and should not be worshipped or obeyed. This tradition, exemplified by prophets and other 'paradigmatic performers' of the lived language of faith, can be married up with that of finding God in present reality exemplified by mystics such as de Caussade and Meister Eckhart; there is nowhere that we can find God except in the realities of the present time and God is not absent from that reality (19). One of the most important functions of pastoral theologies formulated within the Christian tradition is to be faithful to, and truthful about, reality, however difficult that may be.

Of course, it can be argued that there are many realities, and there are demonstrably many different interpretations of reality even amongst contemporaries ostensibly observing the same circumstances. In complex situations and institutions truth is contested and not immediately apparent. It is not that different interpretations should be crushed in favour of one unitary idea or explanation but that part of any worthwhile pastoral theology is likely to be bearing truthful witness to reality as it is perceived. This may include a refusal to be simplistic about the complexities of a situation, however hard they may be to live with.

Witness, which may be costly, is part of the vocation of pastoral theology. It is fundamental if this activity is to be seen as relevant and authentic. In the modern world, in public service organisations for example, there seems to be a willingness for deception of self and others to creep in – all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, we are told. What makes pastoral theology

an important activity is its consonance with a spiritual tradition that requires truth and the facing of reality not the attempt to wishfully pretend that things are actually different. This kind of witness is essential to the integrity of pastoral theologians. It is also part of the genuinely practical service that they can offer to others, both inside and outside the church (20).

### Apophatic

In a sceptical age much pastoral experience has to do with exploring gaps, holes, shadows and uncertainties. There are huge chasms between confident theological assertions about the unfailing love of God and, say, the death of 5 million Jews in Nazi Germany or the death of a child at the hands of other children. Because of its central concern with the realities of experience which contains much to perplex and upset it is part of the task of pastoral theology to be apophatic, ie to follow the tradition of asserting the difference and strangeness of God as well as asserting the deity's similarity and closeness to human beings (21). Pastoral theology lives close to the dark, unexplained and unacceptable parts of life and treats of a God whose face is hidden in reality, whose presence is known more by its perceived absence and revealed in the longing desire which is part mourning over loss, part hopeful expectation (22).

In pastoral theologies much can be learned from the gaps and silences exposed in existence by paying close attention to the real experience of human beings. This kind of *via negativa* cannot be spurned or neglected if pastoral theologies are to have credibility and relevance. Darkness can bear within it a kind of transfiguration, but only if it is acknowledged as darkness in the first place.

### Contextual and situationally related

Pastoral theologies need to be contextual and situationally related; they must forego the desire to address all people in every place. If they are to be useful and authentic, pastoral theologies will emerge out of particular experiences and situations and they may have little significance beyond these situations. Attempts to generalise and universalise often render theologies suspect (consider the churches' teaching on matters sexual which often pays little or no attention to the actual sexual experience of real people).

Pastoral theology at its best, like cultural anthropology, is probably a small-scale enterprise which pays minute attention to particular situations and is more remarkable 'for the delicacy of its distinctions not the sweep of its abstractions' (23). It needs to pay minute attention to seeing and understanding a particular phenomenon and to listen before moving into carefully chosen words. Contextually and situationally sensitive pastoral theologies will be modest in their claims and assertions. This is a welcome feature amidst the past grandiosity of many theological enterprises which have sought to control and order the world

rather than to understand it and to set particular individuals and communities free.

According to context and situation, pastoral theologies will vary greatly in terms of content, method and practical implications. A pastoral theology relating to care of cancer patients in the National Health Service will probably look very different from one that tries to reflect upon care in prisons. This raises the problem of orthodoxy and conformity to central aspects and norms and methods of the religious tradition. While there may be a danger of destructive heterodoxy here, for pastoral theology to be a creative, related activity there must be the possibility of developing new insights and directions. The alternative is death and irrelevance; conformity and orthodoxy can be over-rated virtues.

**Flexible and provisional**

Orthodox Christianity has prized the permanent, the unitary, the eternally true and valid. One of the most valued features of the deity has been unchangingness and constancy. A definite aspiration has been to rise above the changes and chances of this life to attain that which is solid, lasting and lies 'above'. One way in which permanence and certainty has been sought has been to privilege the beliefs, documents and values produced and espoused by the Christian community in the past whence the highest and most reliable truth is felt to come. This bias is reproduced in theological courses and training for ministry where a lot of time is spent reflecting on tradition and the past.

The desire for conformity with the past (actually a selective modern view of what the past was like which excludes as much as it includes) is challenged by pastoral theologies. These tend to focus on the present, the 'living human document' rather than the dead written one (24). There is a theological rationale for this. The Christian God is god of the living and of the present and so it is important to discern how this being is involved in contemporary reality.

In an age of rapid change more significance must be given to the transitory. To respond adequately to the present, the work of pastoral theologians must have a considerable degree of provisionality. To feel that one can only engage in activity or thought if it is going to have universal significance for centuries is to opt out of meaningful pastoral theological activity altogether. Pastoral theologies must be flexible and provisional phenomena which change over time and, indeed, seek positively to value the change which is a real sign of life in the world. Flowers are transitory, but this contributes to their value rather than negating it!

Practically, pastoral theorists and practitioners should expect to change their working theories and theologies fundamentally several times in a lifetime. It cannot be a question of acquiring one set of beliefs and methods at an early point in life and continuing to operate with these unchanged until death. While

Dean Inge's adage that 'he who would marry the spirit of the age must needs soon find himself a widower' is worth remembering here, theology has for too long been biassed towards dalliance with the spirit of yesterday.

**Pluralism of form and content**

We live in a pluralistic world. Due to ease of travel and communication, we are increasingly aware not only of both our unity and commonality with other people *and* our mutual strangeness and differences. While the rhetoric of unity and belonging to a common human race or European Community trips off the tongue, closeness to others reveals that we are separated by great gulfs of language, belief, attitude and culture. In a consumer society the choice of individuals is emphasised and there has been a collapse of socially-binding institutions and ideologies. This is reflected on the intellectual level by the post-modern world view which maintains that we are in a kind of Tower of Babel. There are no common, over-arching theories, belief systems, symbols or languages which will enable everyone to see the world from the same angle or to boil down differences into some kind of unity based on rationality (25).

In the churches there is increasing recognition that people and groups are very different. Sociologist Peter Berger argues that we are under a 'heretical imperative' whereby each individual has to choose their own faith (26). This has set people free to discover and affirm their own world views, perceptions of God and theologies. Experiential and locally-based theologies such as liberation theology in Latin America and feminist theology in North America affirm the contemporary experience of the poor or of women and then interrogate the theological tradition from this standpoint. What was once taken to be a unitary body of truth encapsulated in tradition and mediated by the teaching authority of the church has come under attack as people have discovered the human (therefore biassed-and distorted) basis of traditional theologies which often served as ideological justifications for an oppressive social order. The Platonic God who guaranteed a single truth which could be discovered and used by all within a single, holy, catholic and apostolic church has become less credible in a fragmented world. People allow themselves to express uncomfortable questions about the nature of belief rather than subordinating their doubts and experience to obedient compliance with the interpretations offered them by distant theologians living comfortably in foreign lands (27).

The pluralism of form and content which is implied here does not necessarily imply isolationism or solipsism. People doing different kinds of pastoral theologies can continue to talk to each other and may do so with greater interest. Although there is some danger in the long run that locally-based pastoral theologies may draw so far apart from one another that pastoral theology

fragments, at the moment it seems appropriate to say, 'Let a thousand flowers blossom'. We have only just begun to explore the possibilities of practice-related theologies; experimentation and plurality of approach are inevitable but also welcome at this point.

**Experiential and practical**

In Britain we often have contempt for the practical and resort to ideas and concepts as an ideological way of avoiding experience and practice. So, for example, the ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge for a long time rejected courses that focussed on professional training for jobs, preferring 'pure' theory as a preparation for life. In theological education, practice mostly comes after theory when people have done a good deal of theology which is based on the reading of books and the writing of essays. Practice and experience are thus regarded as an afterthought or an extra in theology. We are only just beginning to take them seriously as primary sources for pastoral theology.

We owe this liberation from text-centred theologies which are only available to the highly educated and literate to the new theologies of practice which have come out of the deeply practical struggles to change the world. Latin American liberation theologians and other theologians of practice have blown the lid off the idea of theoreticians disconnected from reality in some ideal world of intellectual abstraction (28). It is now apparent that all theory is practice and experience laden to a large extent and that it has practical implications (29). So, for example, some theories, theologies and perspectives will uphold social norms (eg, the idea that the individual soul is the locus of salvation so individuals conversion is the key to desirable social change) while others will challenge those norms (eg, the idea that the Kingdom of God is a social entity suggests that salvation should be seen in corporate terms).

This brings me to feminist approaches to pastoral theologies which are amongst the most exciting and fruitful. Much feminist activity has been about entering a cloud of unlearning to find ways of knowing about and expressing experience which values the daily reality of women's lives. There is not much room for, or interest in, abstract ideas that do not reflect present realities here. Feminist pastoral theologians are intellectually extremely rigorous but they have chosen to find a large place for important aspects of women's experience that have been subordinated or ignored within patriarchal pastoral theologies. Thus they give a lot of attention to the actual everyday experience and stories that women tell about their own lives (30). Feminists have used mythology, symbols and rituals to explore their own spiritual and theological experience using poems and pictures as much as academic articles to explore and creatively subvert personal and political reality (31). Feminist pastoral theology in its protest against dehumanising forces, its refusal to turn away from reality, however unpleasant, and its engaged playfulness expressed through many means and media presents a kaleidoscopic range of possibilities for pastoral theologies.

Feminist pastoral theologies are not only good with words, they are good with symbols, rituals, images and people. They deserve a lot more attention.

We still have a lot of difficulty in valuing and interpreting experience and practice and relating it to the world of theories. Fortunately, however, there is an increasing number of practitioners and theorists outlining methods which may help us to do this. As embodied inhabitants of earth with one life here it behoves us to take our experience and practice more seriously, though we must beware the danger of experiential fundamentalism whereby we think (a) *only* experience is important; and (b) our own personal experience is the same as everyone else's, so our experience is normative for everyone.

**Reflectively-based**

A central feature of contemporary pastoral theologies is that of reflection on events and experience in the light of theory and faith. There are several writers who have advanced different methods of reflection on practice or what is sometimes called theological reflection and this is one of the best developed features of the critical conversation which constitutes pastoral theologies today (32).

It could be argued that all theology since theology began is reflectively based since none of it has been done in a vacuum separated from the world. Thus, writers like St Augustine might be seen as precursors of modern pastoral theologians. I would certainly affirm the practice-laden and -influenced nature of all theologies down the ages. However, modern pastoral theologies differ in important respects from their predecessors. Firstly, they are self-conscious that their situation is one of engaging in human discourse which says more about humans and present reality than it does about God. Secondly, they positively value the knowledge and insight that is to be gained from reflection on ordinary human experience, ie not just that which comes from prayer and participation in spiritual activities. Lastly, the reflective process is itself ordered, consciously adopted, reflected upon and can be critically revised if thought to be unsatisfactory.

**Dialectical and disciplined in method**

Many contemporary pastoral theologies are dialectical in method. They proceed by way of critical conversation between two or more different elements. There are a number of elements or polarities which can form the dialectical poles of pastoral theologies. Some of these are as follows:

- theory – practice
- past religious tradition – present religious experience
- situation – theoretical principle
- ideal – reality

- theology – other disciplines
- church community – secular community

These are just some of the corners of conversation which may be included in pastoral theological activity; the list is suggestive rather than exclusive. The more polarities and tensions that are included in the conversation the more complex it can become. Being clear about the nature of the dialectic polarities being included in the 'conversation' is helpful in structuring this activity and assessing its significance.

It is also useful to structure and discipline the 'conversation' so that different voices are clearly heard and attended to instead of there being an unstructured cacophony. This is where methods of theological reflection and hermeneutic circles come in. While these methods can be accused of abstraction, over-simplification, idealisation, and encouraging a pooling of ignorance, they can be useful structuring devices. A typical example of this is Lartey's model of theological reflection used with university students. It starts with an experience arising, eg, from a placement. This is subjected to a situational analysis in which perspectives from non-theological disciplines, eg, sociology, psychology are introduced to help understand the experience. After this, some aspects of the theological, faith tradition are mobilised to illuminate the situation. Next, a situational analysis of the theological tradition is conducted to expose its limitations and presuppositions. Then possible responses to the situation or experience are conceived and discussed. The process ends with some kind of changed action within the situation (33).

**Interrogative, critical, suspicious**

Insofar as they are intellectual, rational activities which make use of ideas and theories, pastoral theologies are interrogative, critical and suspicious (34).

One way of looking at Jesus is to see him as a question mark. Not only did Jesus spend a great deal of time challenging and questioning his contemporaries by his words and his actions, he is also something of an enigma. It is not possible to know with certainty much of who Jesus was and what he was all about (35). This Jesus, incarnated in church and tradition, interrogates and challenges contemporary action and thought, opening up new ways of seeing and different ways of acting. In this spirit, it is possible to rehabilitate the art of asking good questions as a central skill and virtue for theology. Religion has often tried to provide the comforts of certainty, to assert propositions and to claim knowledge. Jesus' example and the *via negativa* tradition in the Christian theology suggests that there is a very important place of asking and living with questions (36). Having some of the 'right' questions may be more valuable than having all of the wrong answers.

Pastoral theology can help people to develop the art of asking and living with good, if difficult, questions in particular situations. Some of these may

come directly from the theological tradition and scripture. These might include:

- what is being worshipped here?
- what sort of god is being served here?
- what sort of a world do we think we are in?
- what are the possibilities for loving human relationships?
- in what should we put our trust and faith?
- are we serving idols instead of a living God?
- how do we categorise and deal with issues of good and evil?

There are other sources of questions than the traditional discipline of theology. The principle of being critical and suspicious owes as much to 'secular' theories as it does to theology which has frequently encouraged unthinking conformity and obedience. It is once again from the praxis-based theologies of feminism and liberation, heavily influenced by the social sciences and the thinking of Freud and Marx, that we need to learn the arts of criticism and suspicion. These prevent pastoral theologies from being unwittingly conformist and passive in relation to personal and social reality.

**Interdisciplinary**

One effect of the de-throning of theology as 'Queen of the Sciences' and the realisation that it is only one, very human way of understanding and analysing reality has been to make it clear that it needs to draw on other academic and applied disciplines to fully comprehend reality. Psychology, sociology and literary theory are but three of the disciplines which may be used by pastoral theologians in different circumstances. There are substantial difficulties here; there are so many disciplines, sub-disciplines, schools, fields and perspectives for pastoral theologians to choose from in trying to analyse particular phenomena or situations. It is not possible to look at a situation from every possible perspective, so pastoral theologians need to think carefully about which disciplines or combinations of disciplines they are going to use, what significance they are going to give them, and how they will use them. This is a stimulating process, giving pastoral theology much of its attraction and vigour, but it is inevitably frustrating and partial too. And it must not be forgotten that different disciplines in, eg, arts and social sciences, have their own implicit values and theologies which may influence the nature and outcomes of the pastoral theological quest (37).

**Socio-politically aware and committed**

This feature of contemporary pastoral theologies is implied in many of the others mentioned above. From feminism and other practical liberationist movements we have become aware that no human attitude or activity is politically innocent in a

world divided between oppressed and oppressors. Issues of race, class and gender impinge on every aspect of life and pastoral theologies do not stand above this. Indeed, it is the realisation that pastoral theology is, *inter alia*, a political activity with important political outworkings that is providing much of the impetus of regeneration for this activity (38).

### Communal

Pastoral theologies emerge out of human encounters and institutions, ie from real conversations with actual human beings. They are best and most usefully constructed within communities, whether ecclesiastical or other, where they are enriched, made relevant and have a positive value in helping people understand and grasp their situations. And it is in communities and between communities that these theologies will best be criticised, modified and expanded. If a theology is seen as a local language, or at least a locally nuanced language, then acquaintance with other linguistic worlds, conventions and denotations can have a positive, expansive effect which prevents a local language from becoming narrow, exclusive and distorted.

Many of the praxis-based theologies which have emerged in recent years emphasise the importance of groups of ordinary Christians (and others) working together to produce new languages, insights and methods so theology is relevant to particular situations and bears the stamp of communal authenticity. Since theologies reflect the needs and interests of particular communities it is important to ensure that the appropriate people are involved in formulating theologies. So, for example, there should be no formulation of pastoral theologies of homosexuality without homosexual people themselves being involved in the conversation. Theologies should also be communally owned, neither the product nor property of an elite minority group. There is beginning to be a good deal of knowledge about how to create and develop theology-producing communities beyond that of traditional scholarly academics. The rediscovery of the central place of the whole community in the production of relevant theologies is one of the great resources for undertaking the pastoral theological process today.

### Analytical and constructive

Pastoral theological activity will often have both analytical and constructive aspects. Pastoral theologies can help people to understand the reality of the situation they are in and how to ask relevant, apposite questions. The importance of this kind of critical analysis cannot be overstated. Although it may sound rather dull, or even destructive, it is important to have a clear understanding of where you are if you wish to see the drawbacks and opportunities in a situation and in your role in that situation. Without a good analytic grasp of a situation you have limited options in seeking to affirm or change it. So analysis

is an important 'moment' or point in the overall process of pastoral theological activity. This helps to question situations, institutions and our place within them. It will suggest ways in which things could and should be different.

However, analysis is not the last word, nor an end in itself. Becoming aware of the complexities of a situation can lead to an inability to act or discern a direction, producing 'paralysis by analysis'. Although the importance of description and analysis is vital and should not be hurried or skimped, it is essential that pastoral theologies should go on to construct positive directions for proceeding when this is possible. It is not enough to stoically expose the nature of situations only to opt out when it comes to changing them. New visions and directions are required; pastoral theology can do much to indicate what these might be while being mindful of the need not to move from description to prescription in an over-hasty or over-dogmatic way.

**Public and clearly expressed**

Theologies of all kinds are in danger of being dismissed as irrelevant in a secularised world. Theologians generally have an unfortunate habit of writing and speaking in a kind of private language which is only understood by a very limited number of people. Their books are only read by other theologians. They are published by specialist religious publishers, and they are not taken seriously unless they appear to be challenging the government on some issue. Thus most theological activity has become marginal, private and of little interest to non-specialists. This must be resisted because, as we have seen, a main aim of pastoral theologies is to make a difference in the contemporary world. If pastoral theologies are to be worth engaging in at all they must respond the real situations of and strive to express themselves in words and concepts that ordinary people will understand so they will be of some use as transformative knowledge. J.L. Austin warns, 'it is not enough to show how clever we are by showing how obscure everything is' (39). It is here that images and metaphors can economically and interestingly encapsulate much truth – consider the power of David Jenkins image of 'a conjuring trick with bones' to denote some of the issues and problems surrounding the events of Easter.

The challenge to pastoral theologians is to address issues which are of significance to people and to find imaginative ways of discussing these and encapsulating them in language so that a wide variety of people can become involved in transforming pastoral theological activity.

**Skilful and demanding**

I have portrayed pastoral theological activity as being like a conversation to emphasise the fact that it is comprehensible, normal, ordinary and approachable. Pastoral theologies can only benefit from having width of involvement from

a range of people and perspectives and this is desperately needed. However, it would be unfortunate if the impression was given that there is no skill, discipline or learning required for pastoral theology so that it is seen as no more than 'common sense'. Pastoral theology is demanding and requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Every method and model of doing pastoral theology implies a curriculum and a set of skills to be learned. So, for example, people who want to use a liberationist methodological circle for group reflection might potentially need to acquire a knowledge of sociology, of politics and of economics, as well as needing groupwork skills and some knowledge of relevant aspects of the theological tradition (40)!

Those adopting different paradigms might need other skills and knowledge. People wishing to explore the pastoral theological potential of narratives and stories could benefit from acquiring skills of textual interpretation, literary criticism, listening, speaking and story telling, while those who want to explore the potential of imagistic or preconscious aspects of personality for theological insights may need to grasp skills of verbal free association from therapists or poets, as well as understanding something of the nature of the mind and personality. The relevant knowledge and skills need not be narrowly academic or cognitive, however. Artistic and emotional training may be essential for some kinds of pastoral theologies; perhaps the most important generic skill of all will be that of being able to exercise sustained attention to people and events (41).

## 5 Pastoral theology as performance

The proof of the pastoral theological pudding is in the performance. What makes pastoral theology interesting and worth doing is the fact that it makes a difference to theory, to practice, or to both. But what kind of difference does it make?

Some of the kinds of transforming performances in word that I think are worthwhile have been indicated in the references to literary sources have been cited. I do not necessarily regard self-designated 'pastoral theologians' as the people who have most to contribute in the sphere of transforming words. We have much to learn from poets like R.S. Thomas and story-tellers like Sara Maitland, as well as from more conventional pastoral theologians like Alastair Campbell who address important aspects of life and experience from a pastoral theological perspective (1). It would be good to be able to point to a great many more invigorating and inspiring verbal performances in pastoral theology: but if these existed then this monograph's plea for greater interest in pastoral theology would be redundant!

Moving away from the literary sphere into that of events and actions it is even more difficult to identify illuminating and paradigmatic pastoral theological

performances. Performers of actions do not necessarily, or even often, record what they are doing. The performance in practice which emerges from pastoral theological conversations may only be of significance to the performers and those surrounding them. It may be very difficult to identify a set of actions, events or attitudes as the direct result of pastoral theological activity. If pastoral theology is a kind of process into which people become habituated, having certain questions or habits of mind, then it is more like a slow swim in a lake than putting on a theatrical performance where there are clear beginnings, endings and components which clearly comprise a discrete 'show' (2). Pastoral theology becomes a way of life for its practitioners; it may contribute to all kinds of activities in which participants are involved.

Although there are published accounts of performances apparently emerging directly from pastoral theological activity it is probably most truthful to see it as leaven in a variety of acts and events (3). This mirrors the Christian theological tradition of hiddenness, partial revealing and the significance that the invisible or imaginative can exert on the seen and present. Like the moon, the unseen, unreal Kingdom of God continues to have a transforming pull on real situations, people and actions in the present. In a world of performance measurement perhaps it is a matter of integrity that pastoral theologies continue to have an effect but, like so many of the things we really value (love, care, belonging), subtly elude outcome measures in practice.

Let me now give some examples of what pastoral theological activity might involve, bearing in mind that there are a lot of ways of being involved in the dialogue between experience and theory and I do not want to exclude any of them.

The first example comes from my current research into the topic of shame. My starting point for this comes from my own and others' experience of feeling shamed. This is a very uncomfortable feeling which has in some ways been exacerbated for me. I feel, by my involvement with Christianity. So, I am interested to ask the question, To what extent does Christian belief and practice actually cause or heal shame, and by what means? I am now using theoretical resources of psychology, sociology, feminism, philosophy and theology to illuminate and understand my experience, mingling these things together with my observation of self and others, to arrive at (a) a significant theoretical and theological statement in words about the meaning and function of shame in Christianity, and (b) some practical understanding and means of coping with inappropriate shame which can be put into action in my own situation and in that of others.

I may not succeed in achieving either of these outcomes, but 'swimming' in the interdisciplinary lake of pastoral theology is proving an interesting experience in itself. I feel my attitudes, thoughts and practices are changing as I conduct my exploration. My activity is an end in itself which benefits and is transformative for me even if I cannot 'do' very much with it directly afterwards. I am unlikely

to be completely shame-free as a result of my pastoral theological activity, though it might contribute to my having a different perspective on myself and my religion and this might eventually lead to practical changes. I am very conscious that I cannot do justice to such a large topic, that I have to work with limited experience, and that all I have are partial interpretations of events and theories. The outcome of my research will be limited and others will dispute my findings and interpretations. The 'jam jar of lake water' with which I emerge in the end may not be impressive and as a practical healing agent it may have all the attraction of one of those lethal glasses of sulphurous 'therapeutic' water that people sell in spa towns. But talking to others about what I have done and how they see things will also be part of a rewarding pastoral theological dialogue which will take me into the next lake, to new theories, actions and events.

For some people the main purpose of pastoral theological activity is to work out what they next need to do in practice. But you do not have to start with experience to engage in pastoral theological conversation. You might start with a theoretical insight or doctrine and decide that you want to test out its validity in practice and contemporary theory. Thus, in one project I took some of the insights and methods of Latin American liberation theology as a starting point and then decided to see what implications they would have for practical pastoral care (4). As I was a psychiatric hospital chaplain at the time, I examined pastoral care with people with mental health problems and tried to see what an approach to pastoral care based on liberationist principles would look like. It was very different to the approach adopted at that time by pastoral carers in psychiatric hospitals. This was very much an individual, counselling-focussed approach while a liberationist analysis and perspective suggested that a much more corporate, socio-politically aware and committed approach to practice was required, mental disorder being as much a social problem related to class, race and gender as an individual problem caused by any kind of 'illness'. I became clear that I needed to do things differently, eg, not look for individual solutions to essentially social problems, not to be so close to the 'therapeutic team' which was often distrusted by service users who saw it as oppressive. Without an engagement in the process of pastoral theology I would not have been able to evaluate the usefulness of liberation theology or see how pastoral practice should change. I experienced a large degree of change of perspective and practice which I now regard as typical of an active engagement in the area of pastoral theology.

My 'secular' writings about cancers and health service management have also been largely informed by being a pastoral theologian. I am critical of totalising thought and language systems, especially those which employ powerful images and metaphors which shape a vision of humanity which may be unconducive to human health and social welfare. It is my (self-appointed!) job to question the limits of reality-shaping discourse and their implications for practice. I do not think I could do this if I were not trained in pastoral theological conversation,

even if I do not express my concerns in overtly theological language. To see the usefulness of this activity consider thinking of God as a 'customer', as we are all bidden to do to other people in public services like education these days. The absurdity made visible by this little theological thought experiment reveals the limitations of thinking about the world and people only in market and economic terms. This tendency might be seen as amusing or pathetic. However, it threatens to curtail our thought and practice *vis à vis* the possibilities available to us in relationships with other people and institutions.

# 6 Conclusion

Pastoral theology should become a more imaginative, creative activity which coins images, metaphors, myths and stories that will enter the public consciousness and change lives and practices well beyond the confines of the church. This would make it a discipline of public as well as of ecclesiastical and academic significance. That is a tall order. But it is only if pastoral theologies make a difference, break into the consciousness of people and lure them towards possibilities that lie beyond the taken for granted that they are really doing their job, bearing witness to the real influence that that which is unseen and imagined has on reality. This is the realm of faith. Unfortunately, pastoral theologians seem to have lost the confidence and ability to be interestingly articulate about the unseen, the 'as if'. It is from management consultants in the public sector that I have re-learned how important words and imagination are and what a difference the language, metaphors and myths of a particular faith system can make in practice (1). There can be a whole world in a word.

I work in a secular institution as a writer trying to provide usable words and concepts which transform understandings and situations in the direction of human well being. It is not surprising that what I have written here is an implicit practical theology of words that reflects on my own practice and observation. I started my formal theological education studying the literature and theology of the Bible. I remain impressed (and intrigued) by the lasting power and influence of its words. The parables of Jesus are full of powerful, imaginative language and images which continue to crack open perceptions of the world. Jesus' saving activity can be characterised in part as his stretching and exploding the world of language with spirit-filled awareness which engenders a surplus of energising, hopeful meaning in the world (2). The parable of the Lost Sheep is about 400 words in length, yet those 400 words have changed the world.

Theologians and pastoral carers, trained in the use and analysis of words and disciples of a religion which has an incarnate word at its centre, need to become a good deal better with words which 'cut reality at its joints', as well as more confident about living with the irrational, invisible reality of religion, which

is Christianity's most important contribution to the world of practical living. Pastoral theologies need to become both more interested in spirit or *theos and* in word or *logos*. Words can kill and they can raise the dead. I long for more brilliant, transformative performances in word and deed that will make a difference to thought and practice. This is my vision and hope for pastoral theology.

# Notes

*All the works cited here are published in London unless otherwise stated.*

## 1 In search of words that resurrect the dead

1. Cf A. Dyson, '"The body of Christ has AIDS": Resurrection and pastoral theology', in S. Barton and G. Stanton (eds), *Resurrection*. SPCK, 1995.
2. I am thinking here of, eg, Alastair Campbell, Michael Jacobs and Tony Dyson, but others could be mentioned.
3. Alves characterises religions as 'the dreams of those who are awake'! Cf R. Alves, *What is Religion?*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984, p61.
4. Christian theology has radically devalued darkness, uncertainty, mist and confusion seeking to illuminate everything in the strongest light and so endangering the mystery which lies at the heart of life and faith. In this respect, mediaeval Italian painting reflects doctrine and the following quote is apposite: 'In mediaeval poetry . . . the splendour, lustre and brilliance of light tend to be celebrated in isolation; when shadow is introduced it is not as something cast by a solid object which interrupts the light but as something belonging to a separate gloomy 'realm'. The clarity of light, which could mean its brilliance, its purity or its transparency, was an attribute of the beautiful and the good, *scuro* had no place beside *chiaro*.' (P. Hills, *The Light of Early Italian Painting*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.)
5. See articles in R. Hunter (ed), *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.
6. See further J.W. Jones, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991; H.N. Malony and B. Spilka (eds), *Religion in Psychodynamic Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; M. Jacobs, *Living Illusions*. SPCK, 1993.
7. The idea of metaphors 'cutting the world at its joints' is from Richard Boyd, quoted in C. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, p 31.
8. For those who are 'insiders' of the pastoral theology scene I am broadly siding with Alastair Campbell's use of creative images to dynamise thought and action over against Don Browning's quest to rationally, 'scientifically', and painstakingly analyse metaphors and beliefs to understand and assess their significance. While Browning's work and methodological contributions are a very important *part* of the process of developing pastoral theologies, I do not think that his approach is going to win many enthusiasts for pastoral theology. The quest for an academically 'respectable' pastoral theology couched in arguments and Germanic polysyllables is a noble one, but it is unlikely to attract much interest or respect outside a narrow, essentially private sphere. This deprives pastoral theology both of interest to the wider world and of influence upon that world, despite its rhetoric of being 'public'. See further A.V. Campbell, *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*. Darton, Longman and Todd, second edn 1987; D.S. Browning, *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983; *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. The imaginative and aesthetic has been an important, if not the most important and distinctive, defining element in British pastoral theology. See further D. Deeks, *Pastoral Theology: An Enquiry*. Epworth Press, 1987; M. Wilson, *A Coat of Many Colours*. Epworth Press, 1988.
9. For more on words as deeds see the suggestive discussion in D. Cupitt, *Creation out of Nothing*. SCM Press, 1990.
10. R. Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*. SCM Press, 1990, p 74.
11. Alves recounts the story of a man who is given breaded brain for dinner and

congratulates his hostess on the tastiness of the dish. When he is told that what he has eaten is not the cauliflower he thought it was, he is horrified and instantly taken ill. This vividly illustrates the power of words to shape experience and behaviour! See Alves, *The Poet*, pp 48–9.

12. Alves is not alone in being able to be creative with language to open up new insights emerging from practical concerns. Compare the work of David Jenkins, Sallie McFague, Dorothee Soelle, R.S. Thomas and Don Cupitt here.

**2 Who needs pastoral theology?**

1. See further, eg, S. Pattison, 'Mystical management: a religious critique of general management in the public sector', *Modern Churchperson 33*:3, 1992, 17–27; 'The use of theology in the secular academy' in F.M. Young (ed), *Dare We Speak of God in Public?*. Cassells, forthcoming.
2. 'To believe in a God means to see that the facts of the world are not the end of the matter. To believe in God means to see that life has meaning.' (Ludwig Wittgenstein quoted in K.-J. Kuschel, *Laughter: A Theological Reflection*. SCM Press, 1994, p 133.)
3. I diametrically disagree here with Cupitt's assertion that pastoral theology is 'the gentle art of running a church that makes a healthy profit.' (D. Cupitt, *After All*. SCM Press, 1994, p 20.)
4. For more on the background to the concept of the pastoral see S. Pattison, *A Critique of Pastoral Care*. SCM Press, second edn, 1993, ch 1.
5. J.L. Carr said that the reason he gave one of his novels the title, *A Month in the Country* was because reading it was as good as a month in the country!
6. Cf C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Fontana Press, 1991, p 14.

**3 The deep, delectable lake of pastoral theology**

1. Alves writes, 'I love the mist which covers the mountains and abysses, and I feel sorry when the sun dispels it because my imagination . . . is deprived of the mist-eerie atmosphere without which it cannot breathe . . . . I do not want to decypher the mystery. I want questions and not answers. I want the sea and not the harbour.' (Alves, *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*, p 8.)

**4 Pastoral theologies as critical, creative conversations**

1. For more on the features of the conversational model see S. Pattison, 'Some straw for the bricks: a basic introduction to theological reflection', *Contact 99*, 1989, 2–9.
2. S. Hampshire, 'Public and private morality' in S. Hampshire, ed, *Public and Private Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p 23ff.
3. J. Patton, *From Ministry to Theology*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990, p 70.
4. For more on transformational knowledge, soft knowledge and knowledge arising from 'talking back' to experience and activity see D. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner*. Aldershot: Avebury, 1991.
5. Pruyser writes, 'It has always been the business of the religio-theological enterprise to *transform* people, not just to *know* what people are.' (Quoted in Patton, *From Ministry to Theology*, p 69.)
6. See Browning, *Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care*.
7. See further T. Kitwood, *Concern for Others*. Routledge, 1990.
8. A. Rich, quoted in J. Morris, 'Personal and political: a feminist perspective on researching physical disability', *Disability, Handicap and Society* 7:2.
9. See Jones, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, Malony and Spilka (eds), *Religion in Psychodynamic Perspective*.

10. Cf R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; M. Midgley, *Science as Salvation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
11. See further Pattison, 'Mystical management'.
12. See further J. Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions*. London: Routledge, 1992.
13. For the creative power of metaphors in theology see J. Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
14. See further, eg, R. May, *The Cry for Myth*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991; J. Campbell, *Creative Mythology: The Masks of God*. London: Penguin, 1976.
15. See, eg, D. Soelle, *Choosing Life*. SCM Press, 1981; *On Earth as in Heaven*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993; S. McFague, *Models of God*. SCM Press, 1987; *The Body of God*. SCM Press, 1993; R.S. Thomas, *Mass for Hard Times*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1993.
16. D. Cupitt, *What is a Story?*. SCM Press, 1991.
17. See further M. Jacobs, 'The use of story in pastoral care', *Contact 95*, 1988, 14–21; *Contact 96*, 1988, 12–17; J. Woodward (ed), *Embracing the Chaos*. SPCK, 1990.
18. For the distinction between different 'levels' of theological activity see A. Fierro, *The Militant Gospel*. London: SCM Press, 1977, p 317.
19. J.-P. de Caussade, *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Glasgow: Fontana, 1971; M. Fox, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*. New York: Doubleday, 1980.
20. For more on the need for truthful witness see S. Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp 261ff. For one kind of example of truthful witness see Church Information Office, *Faith in the City*. Church House Publishing, 1985.
21. See further 'Apophatic Theology', in J. Bowden (ed), *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*. SCM Press, 1983.
22. For more on the centrality of absence and the symbolising desire which springs from this and finds expression theology see especially Alves, *What is Religion?*, ch 2; *The Poet, The Warrior, The Prophet*. Feminists might reasonably argue here that the absence of a revealed God is a feature of patriarchal theology where distance is a main problem. We also need to find new ways of recognising and affirming the presence of God in the ordinary relationships and intimacies of everyday life.
23. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, p 25.
24. The 'living human document' comes originally from the thought of Anton Boisen. See further J. Foskett and D. Lyall, *Helping the Helpers*. SPCK, 1988, p 49.
25. See, eg, J. Stout, *Ethics After Babel*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988.
26. P. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*. Collins, 1980.
27. See further, eg, R.J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*. SCM Press, 1985.
28. See, eg, G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*. London: SCM Press, 1974.
29. See further Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*.
30. See, eg, E. Graham and M. Halsey (eds), *Lifecycles: Women and Pastoral Care*. SPCK, 1993; J. Glaz and J. Stevenson Moessner, *Women in Travail and Transition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
31. See further, eg, M. Daly, *Gyn/Ecology* (1979); *Pure Lust* (1984). Both published by The Women's Press.
32. See, eg, Patton, *From Ministry to Theology*; Lyall and Foskett, *Helping the Helpers*.
33. E.Y. Lartey, 'Practical theology as a theological form', address to Pastoral Studies Conference, Durham, 1994.
34. See further, N. Lash, *A Matter of Hope*. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981.
35. See further, J. Bowden, *Jesus: The Unanswered Questions*. SCM Press, 1988; W. Hamilton, *A Quest for the Post Historical Jesus*. SCM Press, 1993.
36. See '*Via Negativa*' in Bowden (ed), *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*.

37. See further essays in P. Ballard (ed), *The Foundations of Pastoral Studies and Practical Theology*. Cardiff: UWCC, 1986.
38. See further Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*.
39. J.L. Austin, quoted in A. Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*. Faber and Faber, 1993, p xi.
40. Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*; L. Green, *Power to the Powerless*. Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1987.
41. I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, ch 1.

**5 Pastoral theology as performance**

1. A.V. Campbell, *Moderated Love*. SPCK, 1984; *The Gospel of Anger*. SPCK, 1986. The former is particularly significant as it reached an audience outside the churches and has been influential in nursing and other professional spheres; the latter is probably the most thoroughgoing study of an emotion from a pastoral theological perspective ever undertaken.
2. For theology as the acquisition of a set of habits and attitudes of mind which relate to the practice of faith see E. Farley, *Theologia*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983.
3. See, eg, L. Green, *Power to the Powerless*. Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1987.
4. Pattison, *Pastoral Care and Liberation Theology*.

**6 Conclusion**

1. Compare T. Peters and R. Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.
2. I find the literary, interpretative, and rhetorical approaches to the Bible deeply energising and suggestive for pastoral theology. See, eg, R.C. Tannehill, *The Sword of His Mouth*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975; J. Bailey and L. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament*. SPCK, 1992; M.A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* SPCK, 1993; W. Wink, *Engaging the Powers*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

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